



PLATYCERCUS EXIMIUS, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Rose-hill Parrakeet.

Psittacus eximius, Shaw, Nat. Misc., pl. 96.—Ib. Zool. of New Holl., t. 1.—Kuhl, Consp. Psitt. in Nov. Act. &c., vol. x. p. 54. No. 87.—Lath. Ind. Orn. Suppl., p. xxi.

Perruche omnicolore, Le Vaill., Hist. Nat. des Perr., p. 29. pl. 28.

Nonpareil Parrot, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. ii. p. 138. No. 41.—Id. Gen. Syn. Suppl., p. 85.—Shaw, Zool., vol. viii. p. 411. pls. 57, 58.

Platycercus eximius, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 281.—Wagl. Mon. Psitt. in Abhand. &c., p. 530.

Lori-Perruche de la Mer du Sud, Sonn. Edit. de Buff.

Psittacus capitatus, Shaw, Zool., vol. viii. p. 466.

Rose-hill Parrakeet, Colonists of New South Wales.

THE present beautiful bird ranks among the earliest of the natural productions of Australia that were sent to Europe; but no information having hitherto been published respecting its habits and economy, few persons are aware that it is exclusively confined to New South Wales and Tasmania, its occurrence even in South Australia being utterly unknown: in the more distant colonies of Swan River and Port Essington it certainly does not occur; but in each of those colonies it is represented by a nearly allied species, whose habits and general economy are as similar as possible. Although one of the commonest birds of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, it is very local, a river frequently constituting the boundary of its habitat, over which it so rarely passes, that I never, during my stay in the country, saw the bird on the south side of the Derwent; while in the forests on the opposite shore, not more than a quarter or half a mile distant, it was very numerous. I believe it is never seen in the forests clothing the borders of D'Entrecasteaux' Channel on the south, or of the River Tamar on the north of the island, those districts being inhabited by the *Platycercus flaviventris*, whose greater size and olive-green plumage are in beautiful accordance with those vast, and as yet unexplored forests of evergreen *Eucalypti*. More delicate in its structure, and far more brilliant in its plumage, the *Platycercus eximius* resorts to the open parts of the country, such as undulating grassy hills and plains bordered and studded here and there with large trees or belts of low acacias or banksias, among the branches of which, particularly those of the acacias, this beautiful bird may be seen in small companies, the rich scarlet and yellow of their breasts vieing with the lovely blossoms of the trees; in a word, districts of a sandy nature, small plains, open spots among the hills, and thinly timbered country where grass abounds, constitute the peculiar and natural habitat of this bird: hence it is not found to the north of the Derwent, where the country is of a different character; but it is numerous throughout the centre of the island between Hobart Town and Launceston, where small companies may constantly be seen resorting to the public roads, like the Sparrow in England, and upon being disturbed by the passer-by they merely fly off to the nearest tree, or to the rails of the wayside fences. Scenes like these fill the mind with sensations of no ordinary description, and excite the greatest astonishment in those who have recently arrived in the country; the novelty, however, as I have observed in numerous instances, soon wears away, and a caged lark, linnet or blackbird from the land of their birth would be highly cherished and valued, while the beautiful productions of the island would be passed by unheeded, except to deal out destruction among them, with no sparing hand, for some slight injury they may have inflicted upon the rising corn. The above remarks refer more particularly to Van Diemen's Land, but apply with equal force to New South Wales, where the bird inhabits all situations similar in character to those above referred to. It breeds in great abundance in Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales; it is found in great numbers in the district of the Upper Hunter, and was formerly very numerous at Paramatta, particularly in the neighbourhood of Rose Hill, whence its name. It lays from seven to ten beautiful white eggs in

the hollow of a gum-tree during October and the three following months ; they are one inch and an eighth long by seven-eighths of an inch broad.

Its natural food consists of seeds of various kinds, particularly those of different grasses, and occasionally of insects and caterpillars.

Its flight is short and undulating, and is rarely extended to a greater distance than a quarter of a mile, as the bird frequently alights on a leafless branch, always flying a little below it and rising again just before it settles.

Its note is a somewhat pleasing whistling sound, which is very frequently uttered.

The sexes are alike in plumage, and the young assume the bright colouring from the nest ; the birds of the year, although they may have attained their full size, are not so brilliant as the adult, and may always be distinguished by the bill and nostrils being of a delicate gamboge-yellow.

Specimens from Van Diemen's Land are rather larger in size, and have the markings of the upper surface of a greener yellow, and altogether less brilliant than those from New South Wales : I possess a specimen killed on Mosquito Island, at the mouth of the Hunter, which is more brilliant than any other I have yet seen.

Crown of the head, back of the neck, chest, and under tail-coverts scarlet ; cheeks white ; feathers of the back black, margined all round with rich yellow ; rump, upper tail-coverts, and lower part of the belly pale green ; centre of the belly yellow ; shoulders and middle of the wing rich blue ; external edges of the primaries blue, the remainder of these feathers dark brown ; two middle tail feathers green, passing into bluish green at the tip, the remainder of the tail-feathers dark blue at the base, passing into light blue, and tipped with white ; bill horn-colour ; feet brown ; irides blackish brown.

The figures are of the natural size.